(w) An inter-ministerial Task Force constituted to devise an appropriate strategy and action plan, for developing 338 identified towns, having substantial minority population, rapidly in a holistic manner submitted its report on 8th November, 2007. The concerned Ministries/Departments have been advised to give priority in the implementation of their schemes in 338 towns.

Hundred days Programme for Minorities

944. SHRI SABIR ALI: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the 100 days programme of the Ministry of Minority Affairs;

(b) in what respects it is different from previous programmes;

(c) what additional benefits would accrue to the minorities from this programme; and

(d) what special programmes and plans are being made for the welfare of the minorities for the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) and (b) This Ministry has selected five programmes/schemes, under which intermediate milestones have been laid down that are envisaged to be achieved in a time bound manner.

(c) The selected schemes aim to enable the deprived section of the population, including the minority communities, to avail of better opportunities, and create an efficient waqf administration that could generate resources for welfare of the community.

(d) The Government envisages to expand educational and economic opportunities for the disadvantaged section of the minorities through a number of existing and new schemes. A plan budgetary allocation of Rs. 1740 crores have been made for this purpose.

Promotion of Wind Power

945. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI: Will the Minister of NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether income tax benefit is provided to promote wind power and to reduce wind tariff in the interest of general consumers;

(b) if so, how much reduction in cost per unit of generation is achieved due to this benefit;

(c) whether Government is aware that this benefit is not passed on to the consumers and if so, what corrective measures are contemplated for this purpose;

(d) whether income tax benefit to wind project is given upfront; and

(e) whether Government has fixed any norms for operating efficiency, in long term, for wind power and if so, whether monitoring of compliance with the norms is done or not?

THE MINISTER OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH): (a) Government provides fiscal and other benefits to promote private investment in all renewable energy sectors including wind energy. The major incentives are provided as per the Income Tax Act under Section 32 Rules 5 and Section 80. Such benefits help the developers of these projects to reduce the capital investment. However, it does not have direct, bearing on the tariff rates.

(b) As there are other major factors which effect cost of generation of a wind power project, including plant load factor, capital cost, interest on borrowing etc., the above tax benefits result in a marginal reduction in cost of generation.

(c) These benefits are intended to promote investment in renewable energy sector including wind energy and increasing green power generation.

(d) These benefits are given as per the schedules laid down in the respective Income Tax Act.

(e) Only Type tested wind turbines with a certified power curve as per Indian certification system, aligned to international standards are installed and connected to grid.

Tapping of Solar Energy

946. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHWARE: Will the Minister of NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is seriously thinking to generate solar energy to solve the problems of power shortage, which has badly affected the industrial and agricultural growth, hitting thereby our economy;

(b) if so, the budget earmarked for research on solar energy in the Eleventh Five Year Plan; and

(c) if not, the details of hurdles in making this perennial source of non-conventional energy for household, industrial and agricultural use?

THE MINISTER OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is implementing several schemes on utilization of solar energy for off-grid and grid-connected applications in the country. The utilization of solar energy systems is increasing regularly. However, the high initial cost of solar energy systems is a barrier in large scale utilization of solar energy systems, specially for power generation.

The Ministry is supporting research and development to reduce the cost, improve the efficiency and performance of solar energy systems and also develop new materials and devices. An amount of Rs. 160 crore has been earmarked for research in solar energy during the 11th plan period.

The Ministry has taken several other steps to increase the utilization of solar energy in the country, which include (i) taking up expanded programmes to encourage utilization of solar energy systems through subsidy or soft loans, (ii) incentive to manufacturers, commercial users and power project developers (iii) support to Akshaya Urja shops to provide additional channels for supply and